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ABSTRACT

This interpretative study explored the view of how children construct knowledge as proposed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in its position paper "Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8, Expanded Edition" (DAP-DOC) (Bredekamp, 1987) to the views held by early childhood teachers who claimed to implement developmentally appropriate practices (DAP). The methodology used was a naturalistic inquiry into the view of knowledge construction reflected in the NAEYC document and an interpretive, ethnographic study of the practices of the five early childhood teachers. Methods include: (1) a content analysis of the DAP-DOC utilizing Kohlberg and Mayer's assumptions of three views of knowledge construction as framework; (2) on-site observations; (3) formal and informal interviews with five early childhood teachers; and (4) a comparison of the views of DAP to DAP-DOC. Viewed as a group, the participating teachers held many similar ideas concerning DAP. However, in practice, the educators' interpretation of ideas resulted in distinct variances of particular activities. Three of the five educators limited the amount of child-initiated activities to the extent that DAP activities became closed, teacher-directed activities. Based on the study it was recommended that: (1) school districts support teachers attempting DAP; (2) teachers attend inservice meetings on integrated learning and the importance of play in the DAP classroom; (3) the influence of teacher experience on behavior be explored; and (4) the profession continue to re-examine DAP and not be complacent with DAP-DOC. (BGC)

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ED 390 540

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Overview

Title: Developmentally Appropriate Practice and Implications for Knowledge Construction

Purpose:

The broad purpose of this study was to explore the views underlying the interpretation of the term developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). Specifically, this study was twofold:

1. To analyze the view of knowledge construction underlying the NAEYC document, Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8 (expanded edition) edited by Sue Bredekamp.

2. To describe early childhood educator's interpretations of developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and how the interpretations guided classroom practices. The focus was on the expressed meaning ascribed to DAP by classroom teachers and how actual classroom practices compared to the view reflected in the NAEYC document.

Methods:

This was an interpretative and descriptive inquiry into human meanings. Human science research is aimed at exposing the meanings of symbols (texts) and at understanding lived events or actions (experiences) in order to enhance thoughtfulness, responsiveness, and tact. When looking at particular settings or contexts, generalizability is prohibited as the receiving content is unknown to the researcher.

Interviews and observations of five early childhood teachers were conducted in order to gain an understanding of:

(a) the meanings of educators ascribed to DAP;
(b) how these ideas influenced practice;
(c) and a comparison of the educators' views of knowledge construction to the view reflected in the NAEYC document on DAP.

Some Major Results and Implications:

Results indicated that while teachers may consider themselves as using

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developmentally appropriate practices (DAP), in classroom practice they may actually implement activities that reflect developmentally inappropriate practices to a great extent.

It was concluded that these teachers were in the process of translating their interpretations of DAP into practice and that each teacher showed some evidence of change. Viewed as a group, the educators in this study held many similar ideas concerning DAP. In practice, however, the educators interpretations of DAP resulted in distinct variances of practice.

Recommendations emerging from the study suggest that facilitation of continued change and interpretation of DAP would require time for reflection on beliefs and practices, recognition of discrepancies in beliefs and practices, and opportunities to have inservices about implementing DAP.

It was recommended that school districts could support opportunities for reflective teaching practices by:

(a) providing time to view DAP classrooms;
(b) establishing a mentoring process with DAP teachers;
(c) having opportunities to work with early childhood teams; and
(d) administrators who encourage the use of DAP classrooms.

To promote reflective thought about classroom practices such as integrated learning and the importance of child-choice and play, it was recommended that early childhood teachers become involved with inservice sessions addressing DAP and opportunities to implement programs reflecting ideas suggested by DAP literature.

That teaching experience is a knowledge base upon which educators draw when making interpretations and decisions about teaching practices is documented in the literature (Schubert & Ayers, 1992; van Manen, 1990; Ayers, 1989). It was recommended that further research to study teachers' interpretations of lived experiences could contribute to better understanding of the relationship between principles and practices in the classroom.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice and

Implications for Knowledge Construction

This research study was conducted by Lola S. Davis as part of a doctoral program at Oklahoma State University. The school-based components were conducted during 1991-1992 school year.

Abstract

The purpose of this interpretative study was to explore the view of how children construct knowledge as proposed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the document, Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition (Bredekamp, 1987) (DAP-DOC) and to compare these views to the views held by early childhood teachers who purported to implement developmentally appropriate practices (DAP).

The methodology used was a naturalistic inquiry into the view of knowledge construction reflected in the NAEYC document and an interpretive, ethnograhic study of five early childhood teachers. Methods include: (a) a content analysis of the DAP-DOC utilizing Kohlberg and Mayer's assumptions of three views of knowledge construction as a framework: (b) on-site observations; (c) formal and informal interviews with five early childhood teachers; (d) and, a comparison of the educations views of DAP to DAP-DOC.

INTRODUCTION

Public schools are increasingly providing programs for younger children as evidenced by the proliferation of programs for 4-year-olds and even threes. Recent publications from professional organizations, representing various educational interests, have increased awareness of and provided guidelines calling for developmentally appropriate curriculum and instructional methods in early childhood settings, (Bredekamp, 1986; Association for Childhood Education International, 1987; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988; Warger, 1988; Peck, McCaig, & Sapp, 1988; Kagan, 1990; and Southern Association On Children Under Six, 1990). The trend for expanding appropriate practices and restructuring early childhood programs is gaining national attention as research sanctioning the positive long-term impact of developmentally appropriate early childhood programs increases. Public schools are being challenged to meet the needs of young children in more appropriate ways than through the traditional skill-centered, test-driven curriculum.

Public schooling for 4-year-olds is increasing nationwide and kindergarten programs are mandatory in most

states (Mitchell, Seligson, & Marx, 1989). The challenge of how best to accomplish the goals and aims of education in early childhood is imminent and has led to closer scrutiny of public school programs for young children.

The present study will explore views of how children construct knowledge as proposed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children in the document Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition (Bredekamp, 1987) and compare these to the views held by early childhood teachers who claim to implement developmentally appropriate practice. Schubert (1990) notes, "knowledge of teaching...must take into consideration the experientially derived understandings that guide teachers as they carry out their work" (p. 99). What do teachers perceive as developmentally appropriate? What are their ideas about how children construct knowledge? How do their ideas compare to the profession's adopted guidelines? This study was designed to answer these questions.

Problem Statement

A distinction must be made between the term developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) and the document (DAP-DOC) published by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition

(Bredekamp, 1987). Among early childhood educators, "developmentally appropriate practice" is a frequently used term to substantiate particular teaching approaches.

The term developmentally appropriate practice has historically been recognized as deriving from theories of human development. Developmentally appropriate practice has evolved to encompass not only child development knowledge but to include the importance of cultural values.

In practice, however, interpretations that one teacher has of developmentally appropriate practice may radically differ from another's. For example, there are some teachers who view themselves as DAP teachers because they believe in developmental placement or transitional first grade. They feel justified by the notion that holding children back until they are "ready" to learn is in the children's best interests. There are other teachers, however, who view themselves as DAP teachers for opposite reasons, that is, they believe the school should be "ready" for the children. These teachers support the notion of the school and curriculum meeting the needs of children in appropriate ways which do not include developmental placement and transitional programs.

The definition of DAP that has probably received more publicity and stimulated more research studies is published in the NAEYC book entitled Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition (Bredekamp, 1987).

Guidelines described in this book have been adopted for use by NAEYC in the national accreditation of early childhood programs. This document represents the general consensus of recognized professionals in the early childhood field of what constitutes developmentally appropriate practice. The NAEYC organization is the largest early childhood professional association and has approximately 75,000 members nationally. The NAEYC guidelines have also been adopted for use by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) in the accreditation of early childhood teacher education programs.

Currently, research is underway attempting to expose the understandings of educators regarding DAP and the extent to which DAP is being implemented. Hoot (1989) administered a DAP survey to teachers and administrators across New York state. He reported that special educators, pre-k teachers and elementary and special education administrators had significantly better knowledge of DAP than kindergarten, primary and intermediate teachers. He concluded with expressed concern that those with the least knowledge of DAP (primary and intermediate teachers) were more likely to staff increasing numbers of public school preschool programs.

Charlesworth (1990) administered a questionnaire based on DAP-DOC to assess kindergarten teachers' in-service needs in Louisiana. She reported positive correlations between kindergarten teachers' DAP beliefs and implementation of DAP

instructional activities. Overall, she reported a large group of teachers who had beliefs somewhere between developmentally appropriate and inappropriate practices. She noted teachers within a local district seemed to have developed consistent beliefs regarding inappropriate practices as compared to the larger population group. The implications for in-service opportunities ranged from closely supervised, supportive workshops for teachers using inappropriate practices to less structured workshops for teachers initiating appropriate practices on their own.

Hyson (1989) reported on the consistency and reliability of an observational instrument based on the DAP-DOC. The Classroom Practices Inventory (CPI) rated curricular emphasis and emotional climate of programs for 4- and 5-year old children. She concluded that the CPI scores were consistent with teacher and parental views of educational attitudes and that it appeared to be a promising instrument for examining developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood education.

In two recent pilot studies by the author, it was concluded that individual interpretations of developmentally appropriate practice may have a strong impact on classroom practice. In one study, an inventory derived from the DAP-DOC was given to both elementary and early childhood education majors. While scores of the two groups did not significantly differ (means of 19 and 22 respectively), some qualitative differences emerged. For example, elementary

majors viewed the use of standardized tests as appropriate assessment measures with primary aged children while the early childhood majors viewed tests as inappropriate. The elementary education majors viewed the use of textbooks as guides as inappropriate which was opposite to the early childhood majors' ratings. In addition, the two groups differed on the use of specialists (art, music, P.E., etc.) for some curriculum areas. The early childhood majors viewed specialists as inappropriate while the elementary majors approved of the specialists. When asked to state an opinion of developmentally appropriate practices, the elementary education majors were divided in support of DAP in elementary classrooms while the early childhood majors viewed DAP as necessary for meeting individual needs and avoiding inappropriate pressure on children.

In the second study, teachers identified by fellow teachers as using DAP were interviewed about their perceptions of DAP. It was evident from interviews and observations that their ideas about DAP were reflected in classroom practices. The observed curriculum in these classrooms followed DAP guidelines in that what was studied and pursued emerged from the interests of the children. The content areas were built around themes children chose to explore, and large blocks of time were scheduled so that a variety of individual or group interests could be initiated. The furnishings and open spaces were in vivid contrast to a traditional classroom. Work centers dominated the rooms

rather than desks, and children's work was clearly evident. The teachers interacted more frequently with individual students than with groups, and parents were engaged with children on various projects. These teachers' practices greatly reflected the NAEYC DAP guidelines. An examination of DAP-DOC to determine the view/s of knowledge construction expressed in the document would be helpful for determining the extent to which early childhood teachers' views of DAP reflect the views in DAP-DOC.

Background

Educational accountability and assessment have created an emphasis on skill instruction in kindergarten. Increasing pressure to raise test scores has been so widespread that all 50 states were found to be above average by 1987 (Cannell, 1987). This focus on narrowly defined skills contributes to the concern of early childhood professionals about quality education. The National Association for the Education of Young Children published Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition (Bredekamp, 1987) to serve as policy and pedagogical views to guide the field of early childhood education.

Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines reflect current knowledge of teaching and learning based on theory, research, and practice. The NAEYC view of developmentally appropriate practice encompasses two dimensions in practice:

age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. Age appropriateness incorporates human development research that indicates there are predictable sequences of growth and change occurring in all domains during the first 9 years of life. Teachers knowledgeable of these predictable changes are better prepared to plan appropriate experiences and flexible environments. The second dimension, individual appropriateness, encompasses the value of each child as a unique person with an individual growth pattern, learning style, and culture (Bredekamp, 1987). Appropriateness also means that curriculum and adult interactions are respectful of differences in individuals.

Learning is viewed as active and resulting from the interactions between the child's notions and experiences with materials, people, and thoughts. Teachers cognizant of child development knowledge plan experiences and environments which allow and encourage activities planned by children.

Curriculum content is also multidimensional and is derived from sources such as traditional disciplines, social and cultural values, and parental input. For the curriculum to be developmentally appropriate, the content must be age and individually appropriate. The individual children's interests, strengths, and understandings are expressed in the curriculum (Bredekamp, 1987).

The Purpose

The purpose of this investigation is to analyze the view of knowledge construction underlying the early childhood profession's written statement on developmentally appropriate practice as well as to describe educators' interpretations of DAP and how these interpretations guide practice.

The following research questions will guide the collection and analysis of the data.

1. What view of knowledge construction is reflected in the NAEYC document on DAP?
2. What meanings do educators ascribe to the term DAP?
3. In what ways do educators' ideas of DAP influence practice?
4. How do educators' views of knowledge construction compare to the view reflected in the NAEYC document on DAP?

Significance

Beliefs of how children construct knowledge serve as filters through which educational systems and individuals structure schools and classrooms. The aims of educators determine how and what will be taught or evaluated (Kamii, 1990). Understandings of schooling practice reflect the subjectively constructed knowledge of educational communities.

The importance of this study arises from the need to examine the view of knowledge construction underlying the

NAEYC document on developmentally appropriate practice and the meanings early childhood educators ascribe to developmentally appropriate practice. The present study will add to early childhood education research by providing data on the interpretations of DAP by educators in the field. Overall, the study will help delineate understanding of DAP in classrooms for young children.

The results would be helpful to educators of young children by furthering their understanding of DAP. This knowledge may enhance the coordination of program planning across the primary grades and result in more consistent early childhood programs. Knowledge of DAP may also help parents, caregivers, administrators and related school personnel in planning more appropriate programs for young children. In addition, since research efforts on this topic are new and limited, results from this study provide a necessary foundation for exploring DAP in the classroom based upon what we know about teachers' understandings of DAP.

Assumptions

1. Communication affects and is affected by environments.
2. Conventional wisdom that simultaneously determines and justifies practice is generated and perpetuated within communities.
3. Judgments about what is good, right, and of use to children are results of teachers' values and beliefs.

4. Developmentally appropriate practice as defined in DAP-DOC represents the consensus of the early childhood profession.

5. Teachers' knowledge of DAP influences their practice and what children experience in education.

Definition of Terms

Developmentally appropriate practice: the practices and guidelines used to design programs for young children based on age-appropriateness and individual appropriateness (Bredekamp, 1987).

Developmentally appropriate practice guidelines: the National Association for the Education of Young Children's position statement used to guide practices (Bredekamp, 1987).

Romanticism: educational ideology which supports the idea that what comes from within the child is the most important aspect of development: the inner "good" should be allowed to unfold, the inner "bad" to come under control through permissive pedagogical environments (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

Cultural transmission: educational ideology which supports the notion that the principal task of education is the transmission of accumulated bodies of information, rules, or values to children through direct instruction (transmitting a copy...) of such cultural information and rules (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

Progressivism: educational ideology which holds that education should nourish the child's natural interaction with a developing society or environment; progressives do not assume development is unfolding of an innate pattern but define development as a progression through invariant ordered sequential stages (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

Content analysis: a technique for analyzing (in an indirect way) behavior, beliefs, values, or social behavior through documents (verbal symbols). Usually concerned with that which is openly stated (Wiseman & Aron, 1970).

Early childhood education: refers to a variety of group education programs, settings, and age-range of children. This current definition includes programs affecting children from birth through age eight, public and private facilities administered by a variety of

institutions, and which may have a remedial or enrichment focus (Bredekamp, 1987; Kostelink, Soderman, Whiren, 1993).

Early childhood educator: refers to people working in the early childhood education profession.

Preschool: refers to programs offered to children before kindergarten. May be called prekindergarten.

Primary grades: refers to kindergarten, first, second and third grades.

Intermediate grades: usually refers to fourth, fifth, and sixth grades.

Elementary educator: refers to teachers certified to teach children in elementary grades. The certification varies by states, usually spans kindergarten through sixth or eighth grade.

Limitations of the Study

The study investigated five teachers' views of knowledge construction of DAP within one school of a moderate sized school district in a southwestern state of the United States. In inquiry examining human behavior the results are not generalizable to particular cases. The results emerged from a temporal contextual setting.

The interview sessions were open-ended and rest on the assumption that all of the questions to pose are not known in advance because the need for clarification and understanding arises during the inquiry. Lincoln and Guba (1985) characterize this as responsiveness to the cues that emerge when "the human-as-instrument can sense and respond to all personal and environmental cues that exist" (p. 193).

CONCLUSIONS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This study was a naturalistic inquiry into the view of knowledge construction reflected in the NAEYC guidelines, Developmentally Appropriate Practices in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children From Birth Through Age 8, Expanded Edition, (Bredekamp, 1987) and how this view compared to the views held by early childhood teachers who claimed and/or were judged to implement developmentally appropriate practices by their peers. The NAEYC definition of DAP has received enormous publicity and stimulated recent research studies (Bredekamp, 1987; Association for Childhood Education International, 1987, National Association of State Boards of Education, 1988; Warger, 1988; Peck, McCaig, & Sapp, 1988; Kagan, 1990; Southern Association On Children Under Six, 1990; Kessler, 1991; Bredekamp, 1992; Charlesworth, In press). However, the existing research contained no attempts to identify the view of knowledge construction reflected in the DAP-DOC.

Recent research has also been underway attempting to expose the meanings that educators attach to DAP (Hoot, 1989; Burts, et al., 1992; Charlesworth, 1990) and the extent to which DAP is being implemented in early childhood public school programs (Hyson, 1989; Charlesworth, Hart, Burts, & DeWolf, In press). The present study described the meanings that individual educators ascribed to DAP, how these meanings influenced actual classroom practice and also compared the educators' meanings and observed practices to the DAP-DOC. The current study provides additional information for use by administrators, educators, and parents interested in creating developmentally appropriate practices in early childhood programs.

Conclusions

DAP-DOC

The DAP-DOC represents the joint efforts of NAEYC's Commission on Appropriate Education for 4- and 5-Year Olds and the contributions from hundreds of early childhood professionals (Bredekamp, 1992). The document is a position statement representing a consensus of the early childhood profession's definitions of developmentally appropriate practice. This document was written in response to professional concerns from several sources. The publication of NAEYC's accreditation standards, Accreditation Criteria and Procedures of the National Academy of Early Childhood

Programs (NAEYC, 1984) prompted a need for a clearer definition of "developmentally appropriate" for early childhood programs. Additional requests for clearer program expectations arose from early childhood educators in public school programs and preschool programs under pressure to implement inappropriate curricular demands on young children (Castle, 1984). Thus, the document was an attempt by the early childhood profession to distinguish DAP for various age groups.

The framework for analysis of the views of knowledge construction reflected in the DAP-DOC was Kohlberg and Mayer's (1972) categorization of three educational ideologies: the romantic, cultural transmission, and cognitive-developmental (progressive). A content analysis of the DAP-DOC resulted in the identification of the following overriding themes of knowledge construction: 1) learning is a constructive process; 2) teacher interactions should be based on knowledge of child development; and 3) an integrated curriculum should be based on age- and individual-appropriateness.

It was concluded that these three themes reflect a progressive or cognitive-developmental educational ideology. This ideology is rooted in the belief that knowledge results when an inquirer constructs personal understanding of an environmental situation or resolves a relational event (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). This view of the learner is represented in each section of the DAP-DOC. Learning is

viewed as an active construction that results through an interactive process of the child's thinking and experiences. This view rejects the notion that children are empty vessels to be filled.

The teacher, from a cognitive-developmental view, attempts to evaluate educational change primarily through combining naturalistic observations and interviews of children. The teacher attempts to assess children's experiences as they relate to developmental consequences. Thus, the teacher focuses on children's individual experiences and looks for the potential in long-term developmental effects.

The progressive ideology reflects a cognitive-developmental educational psychology. This psychological theory holds that mental structure, or mature thought, is the result of reorganization of organism-environment exchanges or interactions (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972). Cognitive development is constructed within the learner when there is a change or reorganization of cognitive structures. The cognitive-developmentalist does not assume that mental structures are the result of innate patterning (romantic) or that mental structures result from copying events in the outside world (cultural transmission) (Kohlberg & Mayer, 1972).

The Views of Educators

Five early childhood educators (three kindergarten and two first grade teachers) were interviewed and observed during this study. The educators were interviewed separately at scheduled times. The results of these interviews and observations were reported in five sections, one for each participant, organized by the research questions.

Educators Expressed Views of DAP. The educators reported that DAP meant children learn best through concrete explorations: activities and situations should meet the needs of children; the classroom should be child-centered; and that children learn best through their own efforts. Centers were voiced as being a necessary component of the classroom and each teacher reported having learning centers as a primary focus of the class activities. A range of ages in the classrooms was also noted by the teachers, and each responded to age range by saying materials should be flexible in order to accommodate individual differences.

Three educators associated the ideas of play with a DAP classroom. Play was viewed as a way children could pretend but also communicate. The notion that children could stretch each other's ideas and use another's ideas to enhance further thinking was also expressed.

Evaluation was suggested by two of the educators as being conducted through observation of classroom activities,

watching playground encounters and questioning children's understanding of events.

The educators' responses indicated DAP ideas when they expressed views of children as individuals; they recognized a developmental range was normal in classrooms; and they indicated that teachers were to provide a range of educational materials and activities that were flexible in order to meet those developmental ranges in the classroom. The educators also expressed ideas consistent with DAP by suggesting integrated curriculum, allowing children to have choices, and providing a variety of centers or activities as choices.

How Educator's Ideas Influenced Practice. All five educators used informal reading instruction methods on a regular basis. Shared readings with large and small groups were used as a method of tracking print, introducing new books, repeating readings of favorite books, and modeling the reading process. The educators incorporated journal writing into the curriculum, integrated subject areas through projects, center activities, and trade books. The classrooms were arranged to accommodate movement, individual activities, and small group exchanges.

Centers and work tables dominated the physical arrangement of all of the rooms. Exploration of materials was encouraged at some of the centers. At others a task was

defined by the teacher. As a whole, all the educators appeared to believe their practices reflected DAP.

However, actual classroom observations of the educators revealed that three of the five educators provided learning experiences that were in fact developmentally inappropriate (DIP). The centers in the three kindergarten classrooms were more task oriented and closed than is considered appropriate by DAP-DOC. Further restrictions on child interactions were noted when educators limited the choice of centers, the materials and activities at the centers, and teacher dictated topics to be studied.

While all five of the educators were observed to allow free activity time, three of the educators limited play during free periods by imposing rules to restrict movement and completion of children's choices, and by the nature of the materials provided for exploration.

Journal writing in the three kindergarten classrooms was restricted by requiring all the children to write on the same topic. The first grade teachers allowed the children to write on the topics of their choice.

The two first grade teachers provided centers and activities that were open-ended, allowed for individual decisions of outcomes, and supported explorations. Journal writing was supported in both classrooms as individual constructions of each child. Play was recognized as a component of learning, and children were allowed choices of activities for most of the day.

All of the educators supported language experiences compatible with the DAP-DOC. However, three of the five educators included incompatible practices such as phonics instruction through the use of practice worksheets and rote drill activities on a weekly basis.

Further restrictions on child interactions were noted when educators limited the choice of centers, the materials and activities at the centers, and the outcomes of the tasks. Three of the educators limited play during free activity periods by imposing rules to restrict movement and completion of tasks.

Interpretations

The cognitive-developmental view permeated the DAP-DOC. This view represents the most advanced knowledge of child development at this time in the early childhood education field. Although it does not represent all views in the profession (Kessler, 1991; Walsh, 1991), it represents socially constructed knowledge. The DAP-DOC emerged through a process of consensus building that reflected communication efforts, interactions, and group construction from the field. The document was adopted as the position statement by the early childhood profession. NAEYC has used the concept of DAP throughout the accreditation guide for early childhood programs (NAEYC, 1985, 1991); NCATE has used DAP in accreditation of teacher education (NAEYC, 1982); and it permeates the professional literature addressing early

childhood issues. In addition, it is the accepted standard for determining what is good practice in early childhood settings. Practices that do not reflect this view (cognitive-developmental) are considered inappropriate - especially practices which represent the cultural transmission view. The cultural transmission view is implicitly considered to be outdated and even harmful to children's education (Kamii, 1985; Duckworth, 1987; DeVries, 1991). Kamii (1985) writes that the use of worksheets results in children not trusting their own ideas and perpetuates a dependence upon adults to provide a right answer.

Duckworth (1987) explains that children's ideas are less valued in teacher-directed education which results in children becoming discouraged, or made to feel as though "they have no important ideas of their own" (p. 6). DeVries, Haney, and Zan (1991) have reported in a recent study that the atmosphere of a direct-instruction classroom had the effect of reducing the sociomoral level of reasoning among children. There was unilateral control by the teacher. Collaboration and negotiation were not supported in a classroom reflecting a cultural transmission view.

It is anticipated that this view will be re-evaluated and reconstructed through continued consensus building. NAEYC has demonstrated a recognition that knowledge changes and continues to be constructed and, thus, requires a periodic review of published position statements (Bredekamp

& Rosegrant, 1992). This fact is supported by the recent revision of the accreditation guidelines for early childhood programs (NAEYC, 1985/1991) and the publication of a new book, Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children, Volume 1 (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). The new volume edited by Bredekamp and Rosegrant is a continued attempt by the field to further clarify DAP and what DAP means in terms of curriculum and assessment. The editors note that the early childhood profession has historically placed support for an emergent curriculum with teachers. However, they report that this current volume has been published to assist in addressing issues of inappropriate curricular demands on young children such as the book published by Hirsch (1991) which suggests a single national first grade curriculum.

DAP-DOC with its cognitive-developmental view has potential to radically change early childhood education. Increasing numbers of teachers who read the document and rethink practices will revolutionize programs for young children by creating more child-centered and cognitively engaging classrooms. Kamii (1990) suggests that our schools need improvement and in order to build on children's intrinsic curiosity about learning, teachers must reflect about "educators such as John Dewey [who] have amply demonstrated that children learn for themselves when they are personally involved and committed to activities that are

meaningful to them" (p. 172). These ideas are reflected in DAP-DOC.

Views of Educators

While teachers may consider themselves DAP, in practice they may not be as DAP as they believe. Three teachers believed that they were DAP but in actuality implemented practices reflecting DIP to a great extent.

These teachers are just beginning to translate their views of DAP into practice. Further attempts to interpret or make clear their views will require time. Reflection of educational practice takes time, both during and following actual classroom events. Schon (1987) suggests this is "reflection-in-action" or learning while in the action of doing (p. xi). Teachers construct ideas about classroom learning through the experience of living in a classroom with learners. Building ideas about teaching and learning, or "teacher lore" as Schubert and Ayers (1992) suggest, emerges from "assumptions and practices developed from experience" (p. 6). Duckworth (1987) proposes that teachers need time and opportunities "to watch themselves learn" (p. 60). She contends that encouraging teachers into becoming learners will help reveal the intricacies of learning and lead to reflection about teaching and learning. Time to reflect further about DAP in the classroom is necessary.

Teachers must also recognize discrepancies between beliefs and practices before change is likely to occur.

Change is dynamic and results from mental activity and encountering ideas or conflicts that require rethinking. Change does not result from a passive, conforming attitude and is contradictory to maintaining the cultural status quo of schooling. Duckworth (1987) offers an interesting point of what she calls "passive virtues of the intellect" (p. 64). Specifically she suggests that, "the most passive is the virtue of knowing the right answer. Knowing the right answer requires no decisions, carries no risks, and makes no demands. It is automatic. It is thoughtless" (p. 64). Teachers must be able to recognize contradictions between their views and classroom practices.

One kindergarten teacher was beginning to recognize discrepancies as evidenced by her concern for wanting to do better and make further changes in classroom practices. She stated that she intended to continue to pursue alternatives and allow greater child choice. She expressed an openness to continue to rethink her practices. Duckworth (1987) suggests that teachers could better decide what is appropriate if "they wanted to make sense of what the children were doing" (p. 96). This kindergarten teacher's reflections of her practices were challenging her ideas of control issues in the classroom. Fostnot (1989) proposes that when teachers' "own intellectual focus becomes one based on inquiry, teachers develop an understanding of how to encourage inquiry in children" (p. 13). Time to reflect then is a necessary component of change.

The result that the two first grade teachers were found to be more DAP than the kindergarten teachers is surprising considering cultural pressure to use formalized reading instruction to get first graders to learn to read (Elkind, 1981). One explanation of this result may be that one of these teachers had actually participated in a school where DAP was in practice. As a teacher in a preschool with a DAP orientation, she expressed that the staff pursued questions about children with the intent of understanding and providing opportunities for active learning. She was further along in her construction of translating beliefs into practice than the kindergarten teachers. Duckworth (1987) explains that "knowledge is always based on other knowledge - a refinement and a reintegration of the knowledge one already has" (p. 42). This first grade teacher was able to draw upon prior DAP experiences to analyze her present classroom practice. The one kindergarten teacher who was questioning her classroom practices had also worked in a preschool setting. Her experiences of working with younger children may have influenced her reflections about best practices.

The educational degrees of the educators were elementary, reading, and/or special education at the time of study. No teacher held a degree in early childhood education. However, all of the teachers revealed that they attended district meetings and discussed current information. Formal education degrees did not appear to

influence the current understanding of DAP. However, both first grade teachers had recently participated in an emergent literacy course which studied the emergent literacy or the whole language movement; and that movement reflects a cognitive developmental view. Hall (1987/1989) has explained the current knowledge of emergent literacy by expressing that "[R]esearchers from a variety of disciplines have been contributing knowledge which...provides a powerful image of the child as a competent inquirer into the nature and purpose of literacy" (p. 1). The challenge to these first grade teachers has been to examine the role of the teacher and the child in the reading process. Conventional assumptions of teaching reading have required the teacher to be in control of a systematic program. These first grade teachers were reflecting and redefining issues of child-choice in literacy experiences by allowing children to take the lead. The view of the child as a competent learner was also expressed by the teachers.

The view of the child as competent seemed to be a firm conviction of the two first grade teachers. Their classrooms were more flexible in terms of the centers and open-ended play opportunities that were offered to children. The projects that were supported by the teachers allowed individual pursuits within the classroom. Further, it seemed that the two first grade teachers held an attitude of respect for children. Respecting the resourcefulness of children as learners was evidenced by allowing children to

plan and direct much of the learning activities through play. The kindergarten teachers did not reflect this recognition of children as competent resourceful learners. The extent to which the centers were closed-ended and the limited choice of activities reflected a teacher dominated curriculum overall.

Recommendations

This study suggests that the view of knowledge construction that permeates the DAP-DOC is a cognitive-developmental perspective. This progressive educational ideology recognizes the learner as an active constructor of knowledge. This view has educational implications for curriculum development and classroom practices for early childhood programs in public school settings.

Viewed as a group, the educators participating in this study held many similar ideas concerning DAP. However, in practice, the educators interpretation of ideas resulted in distinct variances of particular activities. The following recommendations emerged from the study.

1) The educators in this study spoke of change in classroom teaching approaches. There was movement away from an overly teacher-directed approach with the use of multiple worksheets in a single day to a more child-centered classroom. To continue the support for educators as they think through DAP in their classrooms, it is recommended that the school district provide support for each educator.

For example, the district could promote opportunities for reflective teaching practices by: a) providing time to view DAP classrooms; b) by establishing a mentoring process with DAP teachers; c) by having opportunities to work with early childhood teams; and d) by administrators who support the use of DAP classrooms. Teachers can be expected to participate fully in continued construction of knowledge regarding their teaching approaches (Jones, 1993).

2) In order to promote reflective thought about classroom practices such as integrated learning and the importance of child-choice and play, it is recommended that early childhood teachers have inservice sessions about and opportunities to implement DAP. It is interesting to note the lack of educators mentioning or awareness of specific research about DAP or the DAP-DOC, especially considering that it is a highly visible document and well cited in the professional literature. Teachers can become more reflective and reconstruct their beliefs and practices when challenged with appropriate literature about current research and understandings. Inconsistencies can be revealed and rethought to promote more appropriate practices. Being reflective during the teaching action (praxis) has been presented as an action promoting teacher development (MacDonald, 1975).

3) That experience is a knowledge base upon which educators draw when making interpretations and decisions about teaching practices is documented in the literature

(Schubert & Ayers, 1992; van Manen, 1990; Ayers, 1989). Further studies of teachers' interpretations of lived experiences could contribute to better understanding of the relationship between principles and practices in the classroom. In addition, the influence that experience has on teacher actions in practice could be better explained when teachers attempt to make clear their decisions about classroom practices and examine beliefs-practice consistency (Dobson, Dobson, & Koetting, 1987).

4) The early childhood profession needs to continue to re-examine DAP and not be complacent with DAP-DOC. Knowledge construction is a continual process and isn't frozen in time. Knowledge of child development continues to be generated. One view should not be forced on everyone. There should be room to grow. It is recommended that ongoing dialogue continue among professionals on what is developmentally appropriate practice.

Final Summary

The results of this study of the view of knowledge construction reflected in the DAP-DOC indicate a cognitive-developmental perspective. The views that educators' held about DAP indicated that individual interpretations about what constituted "developmentally appropriate practice" are individual constructions which vary. As a group, the expressed individual beliefs of educators were similar and consistent with the DAP-DOC.

In practice, however, the range of individual interpretation in the application of ideas resulted in discernable variance. Observations of classroom practices indicated that three of the five educators limited the amount of child initiated activities to the extent that DAP activities became closed, teacher-directed activities. Thus, while teachers may express ideas consistent with DAP and consider themselves DAP, in actual practice they may not be as DAP as they believe.

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